

PassersBy

by Magika

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Summary: Rachel's in Sydney, Frank's in Auckland. So what happens when they decide to visit one another without the other one knowing?

PassersBy

Passers-By **Title:** Passers-By

> **Author:** Hilde S. Nilsen

> **Show:** Water Rats

> **Date completed:** September 27, 1999.

> **Summary:** Still in mourning over Rachel's untimely death, Jack finds a piece of bittersweet news about what could have been.

> **Disclaimer:** Not mine, never were, never will be.

Hal McElroy, Southern Star and the Nine Network want them all to themselves. Not fair, is it?

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> Passers-By
 Hilde S. Nilsen

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> Frank was sitting in a deck chair at the deck of the "Footloose", looking out over the ocean. He had been sailing for days that week, and had eventually anchored up outside Auckland, New Zealand. It was nearly Christmas, and he had decided to stay in Auckland during the holidays. He had just come back from the post office after posting a Christmas card to Rachel. Knowing her, she was probably hard at work right now. 'Hah,' he thought with a smile. 'See, Rachel? I made it past Brisbane!' Ah, this was life! Deep blue ocean, sunshine from clear sky... Nothing to disturb him; no dead bodies floating around, no phone calls in the middle of the night, no nosy bosses to deal with... Just him and the ocean. God, how boring! "Bloody hell," Frank suddenly exclaimed and got to his feet. "I'm going home!"

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> Rachel sat behind her desk, pretending to be working. She couldn't concentrate, though. Her mind had often wandered off to Frank since he had sailed away, but the last week even more often than before. It had to be the season, she thought. She had gotten a Christmas card

from him three days ago, saying that he was in Auckland, New Zealand, and planned to stay there for the next couple of weeks. Rachel couldn't help thinking about it. Sometimes she regretted not going with him when he left. It would have been wonderful, she knew it would. Nothing to disturb them; no dead bodies floating around, no phone calls in the middle of the night, no nosy bosses to deal with... Just the two of them. 'Heaven,' she thought. Oh, well, too late now. Or was it? The holidays *were* coming up, and even if she didn't celebrate Christmas, who said that she needed to work? Besides, she had always liked Auckland. Rachel smiled to herself. She was crazy doing this, but the decision was made. She made a few phone calls, then took an early night. The following day she was on a plane to Auckland.

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> 'Home, sweet home,' Frank thought as he got out of the plane at Sydney Airport. Everything was just the way he had left it. Nothing had changed. It felt good to be back. He called for a taxi, and headed over to his old house. Hopefully the spare key was still where he had left itâ€|.

> Rachel arrived in Auckland precisely at 1.30 AM. After getting her luggage, she ordered a taxi to the hotel where she had booked a room. Since she had no idea where Frank could be found, she had thought it best to make a reservation at a hotel, just to be on the safe side. Now she would just freshen up a bit before she went looking for him...

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> "She's gone **where*?!?*" Frank stared incredulously at Helen.
 "Mhm," she nodded affirmatively, trying to hide her grin. "She left this morning."

> "I don't believe it!" Frank threw his arms up in the air. "Here I come home for Christmas to surprise her, and now you're telling me she's gone to catch up with **me*?!?*" He shook his head unbelievably.
 "That's right," Helen replied, not able to conceal her laughter any longer. "Sorry, Frank," she said after a few moments of regaining seriousness. "But we had no idea you were coming back!"

> Frank looked at her. "Yeah, you're right," he admitted. "And I guess it is kind of funny," he chuckled.
 "Mhm," Helen nodded. Then they both burst out into laughter. Helen grinned. "Welcome back, Frank!"

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 "What do you mean he's not here?" Rachel looked at the young man in surprise. "Where is he then?"

> "I told you," the man replied patiently, "He said he wanted to go back to Sydney for the holidays, and asked me to look after the 'Footloose' until he returned." The man glanced at her, speaking very slowly and with emphasis on each word. "Do you understand me?"
 Rachel just stared at him with open mouth for a few seconds, while letting his words sink in. Finally she realized that she was probably looking very stupid, and snapped at him. "Yes, I'm not death!" She glared at him. "So you're saying that he's in Sydney?" It was still quite unbelievable.

> "Yes!" The man was starting to get annoyed.
 "Right." So he had flown off to Sydney, huh? "Thanks," she told the young man, and stalked off without waiting for an answer. She had come here for nothing. The flight ticket, the vacation, it was all wasted. Oh, just wait till she reached him! He was one dead man for sure!

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 "Francis James Holloway, how dare you?!?" Rachel screamed into the receiver. "Here I'm flying to New Zealand just to be with you,

and what do I find out? You're in Sydney! Why the hell didn't you tell me?!?"

> "Hey, calm down, will ya?" Frank yelled back. "How was I supposed to know you'd set off like that? *You* should have told *me*, not the other way round!"
 "Don't you yell at me!!" Rachel replied furiously.

> "Look, Rachelâ€|" Frank said calmly. "I had no idea you were coming to Auckland. If I had, I would have stayed, right? I mean, it's not like I did it on purpose!"
 It was silence in the other end of the line. Finally Rachel spoke. "Nah, I know that. But you know, coming here, wanting to surprise you, and then I hear you just left to go and see meâ€| I just got a little shocked. Sorry," she added.

> "Yeahâ€| You shoulda seen me when Helen told me where you were. I couldn't believe you had been so stupid!"
 "Well, the same to you!" Rachel replied. "That guy who told me where you wereâ€| He probably thinks I was totally insane when I started yelling at him!"

> Frank laughed. "Yeah, I can picture you!"
 "I bet you can!" Rachel grinned, and continued, "Oh well, I guess I just have to get back to Sydney."

> "Why's that?" Frank asked curiously.
 "Frank! It's really no point in me staying here now, is it?"

> "Yeah, but I mean: Why Sydney?"
 "Huh?" Rachel didn't quite follow.

> "Well, I figured since you came to stay with me, it's obvious that you wanted us to be alone, right?"
 "Frank!" Rachel protested, but Frank interrupted her.

> "So why don't we go some place nice and quiet for the holidays, sayâ€| Brisbane?"
 Rachel could almost hear him grinning in the other end of the line. She decided to go along with it. "Yeah, sure, I'll meet you there in a few hours, OK?"

> "Great!"
 She hesitated for a moment. "You're serious, aren't you?"

> "Very!"
 "You really want us to spend Christmas in Brisbane?" She looked amazed at the receiver.

> "Or wherever you want," he offered.
 "No, no, Brisbane's fine!" She smiled. "I'll get a ticket on the first plane out."

> "Good! See you on the airport then! Bye!"
 "Yeah, byeâ€|" But Frank had already hung up. Rachel grinned widely while she collected her things. This would definitely be a memorable Christmas!

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> Feedback very much appreciated!

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